

The Joy of Gifts

Children are one of life's great treasures. Yes, all life is a treasure, no matter the age, but all cultures see something special in children. And one of life's great moments in child-rearing, is that first time little Suzie (or Johnny) takes that candy cane out of her mouth, looks at it pensively, then looks into mommy's eyes and holds it out to share with the one who brought her into the world!

Sure the child loves the candy. Yes, she would be happy to hoard it all for herself. But something wonderful happens! Love is demonstrated in sharing. And, as if it were a pristine new candy cane, mommy takes a bite and the little girl giggles to know she has shared that with is valuable (to a small child) with the one who hugs her a dozen times a day.

It is clear to all genuine hearts that Jesus was so very right when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," (Acts 20:35). To those who live in true joy, giving becomes the oxygen of the soul, the icing on life's cake. To those who have trusted God enough to listen and learn, the giving of gifts to those we love is a joy to behold.

At the next birthday party, watch the faces of **Grammy and Gramps** more than Suzie and Johnny. The joy of giving stretches wide grins on the **giver!** The cost of the gift fades in the brilliance of the joy on the face of the child!

God knows this feeling very well. He gave His only begotten Son for us! Jesus gave up Himself for us (Ephesians 5:25-27). Men give up themselves for their wives. Parents give up time and money for their kids... and we all love to do so!

But Jesus gave up self for the ones He loves even more than we love our family members. He gave up heaven, took on a lowly human body and even went to the cross... all for us (Philippians 2:1-11).

And there is one more gift to consider - **our gift to Him!** We sing, "He gave His life for me, what shall I give to Thee?" There can only be one answer. We cannot give Jesus gold and myrrh and frankincense. We cannot give Jesus a ski trip, a new watch or a new Mercedes Benz.

The gift we give Jesus is **self! You give Him YOU!** Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He did not come to earth to buy material things. He did not take on human flesh to seek worldly things. **He went to the cross to buy your eternal soul with His own blood,** (1 Peter 1:17-19).

Let's remember that reality every day. We give our Lord and Savior the gift of ourselves. Let's help our kids and grandkids make the trip from giving a candy cane to mom, to giving ourselves to the Lord (2 Corin-thians 8:1-5).

Ray Wallace